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ABSTRACT

This study compares perceptions of elementary teachers and principals concerning eight research-based categories of statements pertinent to evaluating elementary principals' job performance. From separate lists of elementary teachers and principals employed in all 20 Texas school districts during 1987-88, 23 teachers and 23 principals per district were randomly selected and surveyed, for a total of 460 in each of the two categories. The response rate was 54.8 percent (teachers) and 65.2 percent (principals). The survey instrument consisted of 37 items clustered into 8 usable categories: evaluation frequency, persons involved, teachers' evaluation of principals, principals' self-evaluation, leadership and supervision qualities, instrumentation methods, general behaviors, and teacher/principal morale. Preliminary findings revolve around simple comparisons of groups within clusters obtained through linear regression techniques. Results showed that principals were more approving of frequent evaluations than teachers. Teachers were more approving than principals of involving more persons in the evaluation process. Teachers felt far more strongly than principals that teachers should be involved in principal evaluation. Teachers had less confidence in the validity of principal self-evaluation than principals. Teachers are more likely than administrators to trust the efficacy of several instruments in determining administrator effectiveness. The teacher/principal morale category produced inconclusive results. While teacher and principal perceptions differed, the small variances indicate the need for more specific instruments. Included are four tables. (MLH)

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PERCEPTIONS OF TEXAS ELEMENTARY PRINCIPALS AND TEACHERS REGARDING EVALUATIONS OF PRINCIPALS

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Running Head: Principal Evaluation

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PERCEPTIONS OF TEXAS ELEMENTARY PRINCIPALS AND TEACHERS REGARDING EVALUATION OF PRINCIPALS

The purpose of this study was to compare the perceptions of elementary teachers and elementary principals with regard to eight categories of statements which research literature suggested was pertinent to evaluating the job performance of elementary principals. Educational literature is replete with articles which stipulate that the principal is the key person in determining the effectiveness of a school. In fact, few authors have ever seriously questioned that assumption. During the 1980s, the research regarding the effective schools movement very emphatically pointed to the importance of the principal as the instructional leader, the key ingredient which distinguished "good" schools from "bad" schools.

Today, in America, few people question the importance of observing and evaluating teachers for the purpose of providing competent teachers, and the evaluator almost inevitably is the principal. But, who is to be involved in the evaluation of the principal? Obviously, the superintendent of the district should be the primary evaluator, but who else should be involved? How often should the evaluation take place? What format? These and other such questions were proposed to groups of teachers and principals to determine the similarity of their responses.

In order to better serve the school districts in the huge state, the Texas Education Agency years ago subdivided the state into twenty districts of approximately equal numbers of teachers. Although the equality of district size is not as well balanced today, the original divisions still remain. From separate lists of all elementary teachers (approximately 75,000) and elementary principals (approximately 3,500) employed in these districts during the 1987-1988 academic year, 23 teachers and 23 principals were randomly selected by computer at the state level from each district, thus yielding a total of 460 teachers and 460 principals. Numbers and percentages of respondents are reported in Table 1. As can be seen in that table, there is a general trend that greater percentages of principals than teachers in each district responded to the survey. In addition to the demographic data in Table 3 regarding the respondents, it was found that approximately 83 percent of the teachers were female but that only 25 percent of the principals were female.

Developed and validated by the primary author, the instrument used in this study consisted of 37 items which were clustered into eight usable categories: Frequency of Evaluation, Persons Involved in Principals' Evaluation, Teachers' Evaluation of Principals, Principals' Self-Evaluation, Qualities of Leadership and Supervision, Methods of Instrumentation, General Behaviors, and Teacher/Principal Morale. Each of the 37 items consisted of a statement to which subjects were to respond on a five-point Likert-type

scale ranging from "Strongly Disagree" (represented by a 1) to "Strongly Agree" (represented by a 5), with "Uncertain" represented by a 3. Cluster scores were represented by the average of the response values to the items comprising the cluster rather than by the total of the response values. This was done so that clusters with unequal numbers of items within the clusters could be compared appropriately.

Anyone desiring to use this instrument in future research should first contact the authors for precise scoring instructions, as several of the items must be reverse-scored to maintain the integrity of the cluster scores. However, examining responses by items only (rather than by clusters) should also prove to be of value.

The cluster means and standard deviations of principals and teachers are presented in Table 3, along with a summary of appropriate R-Square values and the resulting significance levels by category. As can be seen in Table 3, all means center somewhat around the neutral value of 3, and all paired standard deviations are relatively comparable by category. However, because of the large numbers of persons who responded, even relatively small differences between group means were found to be statistically significant.

The research reported here represents only a small part of the data collected and of the statistical analyses performed. Consequently, for presentation purposes, the authors selected to report the preliminary findings and to reserve additional findings for subsequent presentations and publications.

The preliminary findings revolve around the concept of simple comparisons of group means within clusters. In performing the simple t-tests for independent means, the researchers selected the multiple linear regression approach for its ability to indicate a "relationship" as well as test the significance of the differences between means. Consequently, each subject's average rating (the criterion variable) of each category was recorded, as was the group membership designation (teacher or principal). These data then were analyzed to determine the full model R-Square value. Next, group membership was dropped out of the prediction equation, and the new R-Square value was noted. The resulting drop in R-Square provided both the t-test results and the percentage of "explained variance" lost when group membership was withheld.

While group membership resulted in only a four percent drop in R-Square for the "Frequency of Evaluation" variable, that was significant at the .0001 level. The group means for this category indicate that principals appeared to be even more approving of frequent evaluations than were the teachers.

For the category "Persons Involved in Principals' Evaluation," group membership explained almost nine percent of the variance, an amount that was also significant at the .0001 level. Examination of category means indicates that teachers were more approving of additional persons being involved in the evaluation process of principals than were principals.

For the category "Teachers' Evaluation of Principals," group membership explained almost twelve percent of the variance, significant at the .0001 level. Group means for the category indicated that teachers felt far more strongly than principals that teachers should have a significant input into the evaluation of their principals.

For the category "Principals' Self-Evaluation," group membership was responsible for slightly more than a one percent drop in R-Square; however, with the numbers of subjects involved in the study, even that was significant at the .0076 level. Group means for the category require a different interpretational technique than for other categories. In this case the higher mean value for teachers indicates less confidence in the validity of self-evaluation by principals than does the lower value of the principals.

For the category "Qualities of Leadership and Supervision," group membership explains only slightly more than two percent of the variance, significant at the .0006 level. Examination of group means indicates that teachers are somewhat more inclined than principals to view general qualities of leadership and supervision as fairly important competencies that should be possessed by principals.

For the category "Methods of instrumentation," group membership explained five percent of the variance, significant at the .0001 level. Examination of the group means indicates that teachers are more likely than administrators to trust the efficacy of several instruments in determining the effectiveness of administrators.

For the category "General Behaviors," group membership explains almost seventeen percent of the variance, significant at the .0026 level. Examination of group means reflects teacher opinion that discrepancies exist between the evaluations of principals by teachers and by the principals themselves, but that teachers tend to view teacher evaluation of principals as one way of assisting the principal in improving leadership skills.

For the category "Teacher-Principal Morale," group membership explained less than one percent of the variance and, in spite of the numerous subjects in the study, was not found to be statistically significant. Consequently, any discussion of the meaning of differences between teachers' and principals' scores for this category is now moot.

In summary, the instrument utilized in this study was, to some degree, capable of distinguishing various differences in the perceptions of public school elementary teachers and principals regarding various components of the processes, procedures, rationales, and specifics used for evaluating elementary principals. However, the relatively small variance explained, in many cases, by the drop in R-Square from full to reduced models should encourage researchers interested in this topic to continue their search for better and more specific instruments.

TABLE 1: SURVEY RETURN RATES FOR ELEMENTARY TEACHERS AND PRINCIPALS BY REGIONAL SERVICE CENTER DISTRICT

Texas Regional Service District	Frequency of Return			Percentage of Return		
	Teacher	Principal	Total	Teacher	Principal	Total
1	8	11	19	34.8	47.8	41.3
2	12	21	33	52.2	91.3	71.7
3	16	14	30	69.6	60.9	65.2
4	11	16	27	69.6	47.8	58.7
5	12	14	26	52.2	60.9	56.5
6	14	13	27	60.9	56.5	58.7
7	15	12	27	65.2	52.2	58.7
8	12	18	30	52.2	78.3	65.2
9	13	18	31	56.5	78.3	67.4
10	9	16	25	39.1	69.6	54.3
11	13	15	28	56.5	65.2	58.7
12	9	14	23	39.1	60.9	50.0
13	15	14	29	65.2	60.9	63.0
14	14	18	32	60.9	78.3	69.6
15	15	17	32	65.2	73.9	69.6
16	13	15	28	56.5	65.2	60.9
17	12	13	25	52.2	56.5	54.3
18	13	18	31	56.5	78.3	67.4
19	16	13	29	69.6	56.5	63.0
20	10	10	20	43.5	43.5	43.5
TOTALS	252	300	552	54.8	65.2	60.0

TABLE 2: TEACHER AND PRINCIPAL DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

Variable	Teachers		Principals	
	Total	Percent	Total	Percent
DEGREE:				
Bachelor's	150	(59.5)	5	(1.7)
Master's	84	(33.3)	229	(76.3)
Specialist's +	18	(7.1)	51	(17.0)
No Response	0	(0.0)	15	(5.0)
AGE:				
20-30 years	41	(16.3)	5	(1.7)
31-40 years	91	(36.1)	61	(20.3)
41-50 years	72	(28.6)	114	(38.0)
51 & Over	39	(15.5)	101	(33.7)
No Response	9	(3.6)	19	(6.3)
YEARS OF EXPERIENCE:				
1-3 years	25	(9.9)	10	(3.3)
4-6 years	42	(16.7)	8	(2.7)
7-10 years	39	(15.5)	19	(6.3)
11-15 years	54	(21.4)	39	(13.0)
16-20 years	39	(15.5)	63	(21.0)
21-25 years	20	(9.9)	48	(16.0)
26 & Over	25	(7.9)	94	(31.3)
No Response	8	(3.2)	19	(6.3)
YEARS IN DISTRICT:				
1-3 years	63	(25.0)	57	(19.0)
4-6 years	42	(19.4)	39	(13.0)
7-10 years	44	(17.5)	39	(13.0)
11-15 years	44	(17.5)	39	(13.0)
16-20 years	21	(8.3)	52	(17.2)
21 & Over	22	(8.7)	55	(18.3)
No Response	9	(3.6)	19	(6.3)
DISTRICT SIZE:				
Below 500	48	(19.0)	91	(30.3)
500- 1,000	51	(20.2)	60	(20.0)
1,001- 5,000	94	(37.3)	96	(32.0)
5,001-10,000	16	(6.3)	24	(8.0)
10,001-20,000	22	(8.7)	18	(6.0)
20,000 & Over	21	(8.3)	11	(3.7)

TABLE 3: COMPARISONS OF ELEMENTARY TEACHERS' and PRINCIPALS' PERCEPTIONS BY CLUSTER SCORES

Group	Teachers		Principals		R^2	p
	$\bar{X}$	SD	$\bar{X}$	SD		
Frequency of Evaluation	3.39	.254	3.28	.252	.041	.0001
Persons Involved in Principals' Evaluation	2.92	.648	2.51	.654	.089	.0001
Teachers' Evaluation of Principals	3.60	.610	3.16	.589	.119	.0001
Principals' Self-Evaluation	3.19	.427	3.08	.476	.013	.0076
Qualities of Leadership and Supervision	3.64	.307	3.55	.315	.021	.0006
Methods of Instrumentation	3.70	.350	3.54	.330	.050	.0001
General Behaviors	3.76	.372	3.66	.388	.165	.0026
Teacher-Principal Morale	2.96	.664	2.87	.661	.005	NS

TABLE 4: THE 37 ITEMS OF THE PRINCIPAL EVALUATION INSTRUMENT

1. The evaluation of the principal should focus on criteria that make a difference in the quality of education the schools provide.
2. Evaluation instruments should be determined by the job description of the principal.
3. The evaluation of the principal should occur at least annually.
4. Discrepencies exist between evaluations by teachers and evaluations by principals.
5. Principals should be evaluated on their leadership ability as well as on managerial skills.
6. Evaluation of the principals should be in the form of check lists to remove bias of the evaluator.
7. Principals tend to evaluate themselves higher than others rate them (teachers, superintendents, etc.).
8. Evaluations of principals should be objective.
9. Evaluation of principals is a threat to the management of the school.
10. Principals should choose the instrument for their evaluations.
11. Principal evaluations should stimulate creativity in programs and implementations.
12. The most important goal of the evaluation of the principal is to determine effectiveness.
13. Classified staff (janitors, secretaries, cooks, etc.) should be involved in the evaluation of the principal.
14. Students should be involved in the evaluation of the principal.
15. Principals should accomplish self-evaluation.
16. Teachers should be involved in the evaluation of principals.
17. The best evaluations are made by large groups of evaluators.
18. Evaluations of the principal should be formal.
19. The evaluation of the principal should focus attention only on performance.
20. Student achievement on nationally-standardized tests should be reflected in the evaluation of the principal.
21. Evaluation of principals should reflect their active involvement in the presentation of staff development and in-service programs.
22. The elements upon which the principal is to be evaluated should be sharply defined.
23. The principal's self-evaluation is not a reliable indicator of the kind of job being accomplished.
24. Lack of observation or knowledge of the theories of effective leadership contributes to variations in the methods used to evaluate principals.
25. Principals tend to evaluate themselves more accurately than do others (teachers, superintendents, etc.).

(TABLE 4 -- Continued)

26. The principal's teaching skills should be evaluated in addition to managerial skills.
27. Principal evaluations should only occur every two to three years.
28. Teacher evaluations of principals affect the total morale of the school.
29. Principal evaluations should be informal.
30. Principals are threatened when evaluated by teachers and others.
31. Evaluations of principals should focus on general behaviors.
32. The competencies of the principal affect all aspects of the school.
33. Variances in job descriptions necessitate use of different methods for the evaluation of principals.
34. Teachers may be threatened by their involvement in the process of evaluating the principal.
35. Key competencies for principals are not always what educators think they are.
36. Community members should take part in the evaluation of the principal.
37. Skills in supervision of teaching should be reflected in the evaluation of the principal.

Note the following cluster headings and item numbers:

A.	Frequency of Evaluation:	3, 27
B.	Persons Involved in Principals' Evaluation:	13, 14, 16, 17, 30, 36
C.	Teachers' Evaluation of Principals:	16, 28, 30, 34
D.	Principals' Self-Evaluation	7, 10, 15, 23, 25
E.	Qualities of Leadership and Supervision	5, 11, 12, 19, 21, 26, 32, 37
F.	Methods of Instrumentation:	1, 2, 4, 6, 8, 10, 18, 22, 24 29, 31, 33
G.	General Behaviors:	1, 4, 9, 12, 22
H.	Teacher/Principal Morale:	9, 28, 30, 34